

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /050 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO /SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2684

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 21591

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MILI, TH

SUBJ: NEWS REPORTS: THAI OFFICIALS OPPOSE U.S. RESIDUAL PRE-
SENCE AT UTAPAO

REF: BANGKOK 21513

1. ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILIES THE NATION AND BANGKOK POST TODAY
CARRY REACTIONS TO NATION ARTICLE THAT U.S. WANTS TO KEEP
RESIDUAL PRESENCE AT UAPAO.

2. FROM THE NATION: BEGIN TEXT. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAMAN
ADIREKSAN STRONGLY OPPOSED THE AMERICAN REQUEST FOR MAKING
UTAPAO BASE AVAILABLE FOR CONTINGENCY USE AFTER THE TOTAL

PULLOUT BY MARCH 20 NEXT YEAR. "I WOULD AGREE TO EMERGENCY USE
FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES BUT NOT FOR MILITARY USE," MAJOR
GENERAL PRAMAN TOLD REPORTERS. HE SAID HE WOULD ALSO OPPOSE
ANY REQUEST FOR LEAVING BEHIND A RESIDUAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
FORCE AT UTAPAO. FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN NITSAI VEJAJIVA
SAID THERE WAS NO OFFICIAL REQUEST TO THAT EFFECT FROM THE
UNITED STATES. THE REQUEST, THE NATION LEARNED, WAS PUT FORWARD
BY AMERICAN AUTHORITIES DURING DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THAI AND

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AMERICAN AUTHORITIES. "ALL BASES HERE ARE THAI AND THE AMERICANS

WILL HAVE TO GO," MR. NISAI SAID. ASKED WHETHER ALL AMERICAN TROOPS WILL DEFINITELY LEAVE THAILAND BY MARCH 20 NEXT YEAR, THE SPOKESMAN SAID: "THE DEADLINE IS EXPECTED TO BE MET." LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST FRONT PARTY, MR. KLAEW NORAPATI, ALSO OPPOSED THE PROPOSAL. "IF THE GOVERNMENT THINKS THERE IS A NEED FOR IT, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MUST APPROVE IT AS STIPULATED IN THE CONSTITUTION," HE SAID. LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND, COLONEL SOMKID SRISANGKHOM, SAID HE WOULD AGREE WITH THE CONTINUED STATIONING OF A RESIDUAL TECHNICAL FORCE ONLY IF IT HELPS TO KEEP THE BASE OPERABLE. END TEXT.

3. FROM BANGKOK POST: BEGIN TEXT. THE THAI GOVERNMENT WILL NOT ALLOW THE U.S. TO USE THE UTAPAO AIRBASE AFTER THE PULL-OUT DEADLINE FOR AMERICAN TROOPS NEXT MARCH, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INFORMATION DEPARTMENT NITSAI VEJJAJIVA SAID YESTERDAY. BUT HE SAID THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS NOT ASKED FOR THE USE OF THE BIG AIRBASE AFTER MARCH. END TEXT.

4. WE HAVE REPLIED TO QUERIES FROM NYT AND REUTER WITH PRESS GUIDANCE PROVIDED REFTEL.

5. COMMENT. THESE STATEMENTS DO NOT NECESSARILY PRECLUDE REACHING AGREEMENT ON THE KIND OF RESIDUAL U.S. PRESENCE AT UTAPAO WHICH AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED DURING RECENT CONSULTATIONS. HOWEVER, THE PUBLIC POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE MFA SPOKESMAN AND THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER/MINISTER OF DEFENSE APPEAR TO SHRINK THE NEGOTIATING PARAMETERS. THESE OFFICIALS WILL FIND THEIR STATEMENTS DIFFICULT TO DISAVOW. THIS POINTS UP NEED FOR US TO MOVE QUICKLY TO OPEN TALKS BEFORE CONTINUING PUBLIC DISCUSSION FURTHER REDUCES THE OPTIONS.
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